



News Release

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Winning With Asthma

New online tool teaches those involved in youth sports about asthma

(Salt Lake City, UT) –Youth with asthma do not have to spend their lives watching sports from the stands because their disease is not understood. Utah Department of Health (UDOH), with the help of several community youth organizations, has developed an online asthma educational tool to educate coaches, referees, physical education teachers and anyone involved in youth sports about asthma.

The 30-minute educational program, available online at www.WinningWithAsthma.org, is one of the first of its kind. It encourages those involved in youth sports, especially coaches, to understand how to help athletes properly manage their asthma during athletic events.

Whitney Hugie was 7 years old when diagnosed with asthma and is part of a family of siblings that manages their asthma while participating in sports. “The best thing a coach can do to help an athlete with asthma is understand when they’re having a hard time breathing and what triggers their asthma. I want to compete just like anyone else, but I need to make sure my asthma is under control and a coach is a part of that,” said now 14-year-old Hugie.

The program highlights local professional coaches — Jerry Sloan with the Utah Jazz and John Ellinger with the Salt Lake REAL soccer team. The program teaches:

- proper medication management
- ways to prevent exercise-induced asthma
- steps to take when athletes are experiencing asthma attacks
- asthma triggers, what they are and what can be done to avoid them
- guidelines specific for cold-weather sports

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Those who complete the program receive a booklet with additional asthma information and a coach's clipboard with "What to Do During an Asthma Attack" printed on the back.

"About any team will have at least one person with asthma," said Ted Sierer, wrestling coach for Brighton High School. "Last year my wrestling squad had at least three with the disease. This program would have been really helpful when I first started coaching."

Utah data indicate approximately 1 in 10 people in Utah have asthma, an increase of approximately 5 percent from 2001.

Asthma is one of the most common chronic diseases affecting children in the United States and often causes repeated episodes of wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness and coughing that can interrupt athletic events for those with asthma. Although there is no known cure, asthma symptoms can generally be controlled.

Coaches, referees, physical education teachers and others involved in youth sports interested in participating in the program can visit www.WinningWithAsthma.org. For background information, visit www.health.utah.gov/asthma/wwa.html.

Local partners who have participated in the development or promotion of the program include Salt Lake Parks and Recreation, Jewish Community Center of Salt Lake, Utah State Office of Education, Utah Youth Soccer League, Logan City Parks and Recreation, Sandy City Parks and Recreation and multiple high school coaches and referees.

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